

THE OUTL

A Stirring

Author of "Dr."

With Illustrations by

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THE HOUSE BY THE
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The small town of Shoreham, full of the Lancastrian nobles, Earl Basingham was killed. Earl Hastings was killed. And Hastings was killed.

two hundred; Sir Daniel
vior and once more grow
tions, lay in a house of his
street, with three score
had changed indeed.

It was a black, bitter
first week of January, a
high wind, and every like
the morning.

In an obscure alehouse
the harbor, three or four
and eating a hasty meal
all likely, lusty, weather-
of hand, bold of eye; and
plain, talrards, like country

drunken soldier might be
fore he sought a quarrel in

A little apart before the main body of the same fashion, though his looks that he was both have won a sword, had been stay," said one of the like to me. "I will com place for jolly fellows. A open country, good cover here are about in a town enemies; and, for the built see if it show not the the "Tis for Master Shelton's then, adding his hand to the fire.

"I will do much for 30 earned me the first; "You for a man—nay, brother "Lawless, y' have been gallowsward," observed a young thing, that was the port ye sail for. And a town service, why did you Ye might a trader, with a Ye were keen to serve Shelton; naught would plea with us; and now ye gallows."

The door of the inn open entered hastily and appro the fire.

"Master Shelton," he goeth forth with a pal archers.

"Dick (for this was coe stantly to his feet.

"Lawless," he said, Capper's watch. Crenan Capper lead forward at this time, an he go to Yo

The next moment they dark street, and Capper, the door, related to where the wind at a little dista

The town was already new from the streets, easier than to follow the vation. The two link-b followed a single man. T about in the town, he brought up by the four upon his arm. Th walk, threatening the ing over to the shore.

"He hath gone ach asked Dick, in a whi- the third time, and Shelton," returned Capper, same hour and with the and his end were a

Sir Daniel and his sals to the outskirts of the an open town, and the lords who lay there kept small roads, it was part usen by any of across the open country.

The place which Sir D ing came to an abrupt e

was a stretch of rough d
the sea surf was audible
were no guards in the
much as a candle burnin
(Dick and his two outl

"Hey," said Dick, "I see them." Meanwhile, Sir Danie
gave a full halt. The torches
glowed, and the men lay down.
The arrival of the other party
was seen near at hand. A group
of four men only—a pal-

"Is it you, my lord?"
"It is I, indeed; and I gave proof of his ardor by applying the leader of the pack would not rather find pagans, than this pinch of snuff."
"My lord," returned the king, "will be the more beholding to me, if you will But shall we forth? for I have seen my merchandise, and I must get home."
"But why keep ye behind me?" said the other, "I have no more to say."

"I have told you, Daniel," the reason only. Neither do I farther. Satisfaction

your old gossip, Danie
abroad that y^e are to v
I give you my word ye
right soon. Ye will fit
his back."

Meantime the two
briskly forward over

torches going before the
wind and scattering
of flame, and the rear
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Presently they came

beach. The air smelt

THE OUTLAWS OF TUNSTALL FOREST

A Stirring Serial of Romantic Adventure.

BY
Wm. L. G. W. W.

Author of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," "Treasure Island," "Kidnapped," Etc., Etc.

With Illustrations by Leading Artists for the Century, Harper's, St. Nicholas, Etc.

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CHAPTER I.

THE HOUSE BY THE SHORE.

MONTAGNE had passed away since Richard Shelton had been the hands of his guardian. These months had been eventful for England. The party of Lancaster, which was then in the very article of death, had once more raised its head. The Yorkists defeated and dispersed their leader butchered on the field, it seemed, for a very brief season in the winter following upon the events already recorded, as if the house of Lancaster had finally triumphed over the house of York.

The small town of Shoreby-on-the-Till was full of the Lancastrian nobles of the neighborhood. Earl Risingham was there, with three hundred men-at-arms; Lord Shoreby, with two hundred; Sir Daniel himself, high in favor and once more growing rich on confiscations, lay in a house of his own, on the main street, with three score men. The world had changed indeed.

It was a black, bitter cold evening in the first week of January, with a hard frost, a high wind, and every likelihood of snow before the morning.

In an obscure alehouse in a by-street near the harbor, three or four men sat drinking and eating a hasty meal of eggs. They were a likely, lusty, weather-beaten fellows, hard of hand, bold of eye; and though they were plain tabards, like country ploughmen, and their drunken soldier might have looked twice before he sought a quarrel in such company.

A little apart before the huge fire sat a younger man, almost alone. He was a handsome fellow, though it was easy to see by his looks that he was better born, and might have won a sword, had the time suited.

"Nay," said one of the men at the table; "I like it not. I'll come of it. This is no place for jolly fellows. A jolly fellow loveth open country, good cover, and scarce foes; but we are shut in in a town, and about with enemies; and for the bull's-eye of misfortune, see it is not over the morning."

"Tis for Master Shelton then," said another, nodding his head toward the door before the fire.

"I'll do much for Master Shelton," returned the first; "but to come to the galleys for any man—my brothers, not that!"

"Lawless," he said, "all your life going gallowsward, observed a third. This is a strange thing, that ye should dislike so much the port ye sail for. And sith ye dislike this town service, why did ye volunteer, brother?"

"Ye might as well ask me to serve with Master Shelton; naught would please you but to join with us; and now ye grumble and talk gallowsward!"

The door of the inn opened and another man entered hastily and approached the youth before the fire.

"Master Shelton," he said, "Sir Daniel goeth forth with a pair of links and four archers."

"Dick (for this was our young friend) rose instantly to his feet."

"Lawless," he said, "ye will take John Capper's watch, Greenhouse, follow me, my brothers, and his six men, will follow him this time, and he go to York."

The next moment they were outside in the dark street, and Capper, the man who had just come, pointed to where two torches blazed in the wind at a little distance.

The town was already sound asleep; no one moved upon the streets, and there was nothing easier than to follow the party without observation. The two link-bearers went first; next followed a single man, whose long cloak blew about him in the wind; and the rest were brought up by the four archers, each with his bow upon his arm. They moved at a brisk walk, threading the intricate lanes and drawing nearer to the shore.

"He hath gone each night in this direction?" asked Dick, in a whisper.

"This is the third night running, Master Shelton," returned Capper, "and still at the same hour and with the same small following, as though his end were secret."

Sir Daniel and his six men were now come to the outskirts of the country. Shoreby was an open town, and though the Lancastrian link-bearers lay there kept a strong guard on the main roads, it was still possible to enter or depart unseen by any of the lesser streets or across the open country.

The lane which Sir Daniel had been following came to an abrupt end. Before him there was a stretch of rough down, and the noise of the sea surf was audible upon one hand. There were no guards in the neighborhood, nor so much as a candle burning in a window.

Dick and his two outlaws drew a little closer to the object of their chase, and presently, as they came forth from between the houses and could see a little farther upon either hand, they were aware of another torch drawing near from another direction.

"Hey," said Dick, "a small treason."

Meanwhile, Sir Daniel's party had come to a full halt. The torches were stuck into the sand, and the men lay down, as if to await the arrival of the other party.

This drew near at a good rate. It consisted of four men only—a pair of archers, a valet with a link, and a clocked gentleman, walking in his midst.

"My lord," returned Sir Daniel, "beauty will be the more beholden, misdoit it not. But shall we forth? for the sooner we have seen my merchandise, the sooner shall we both get home."

"But why keep ye her here, good knight?" inquired the other. An shrewd eye, and a long torch, and so wealthy, why do ye not bring her forth among her mates? Ye would soon make her a good marriage, and no need to freeze your fingers and risk arrow-shots by going abroad at such untimely seasons in the dark."

"I have told you, my lord," replied Sir Daniel, "the reason thereof concerneth me only. Neither do I purpose to explain it farther. Suffice it, if ye be weary of your gossip, Daniel Brackley, publish it abroad that I am to wed Joanna Solley, and I give you my word ye will be quit of him right soon. Ye will find him with an arrow in his back."

Meanwhile the two gentlemen were walking briskly forward over the down; the three torches going before them, stooping against the wind and scattering clouds of smoke and tufts of flame, and the rear brought up by the six archers.

Close upon the heels of these, Dick followed. He had, of course, heard no word of this conversation; but he had recognized in the second of the speakers old Lord Shoreby himself, a man of an infamous reputation, whom even Sir Daniel affected, in public, to condemn.

Presently they came close down upon the beach. The air smelt salt, the noise of the

surf increased; and here, in a large walled garden, there stood a small house of two stories, with stable and other offices.

The foremost torch-bearer unlocked a door in the wall, and after the whole party had passed into the garden, again closed and locked it on the other side.

Dick and his men were thus excluded from any further following, unless they should scale the wall and thus put their necks into a trap. They sat down in a tuft of furze and waited. The red glow of the torches moved up and down and to and fro within the enclosure, as if the link-bearers steadily patrolled the garden.

Twenty minutes passed, and then the whole party issued forth again upon the down, and Sir Daniel and the baron, after an elaborate salutation, separated and turned severally homeward, each with his own following of men and torches.

As soon as the sound of their steps had been swallowed by the wind, Dick got to his feet as briskly as he was able, for he was stiff and aching with cold, and he ever ready to give me a hand if I fall foully on the other side.

And so saying, he dropped into the garden. It was pitch dark; there was no light in the house. The wind whistled shrill among the poor shrubs, and the surf beat upon the beach; there was no other sound. Cautiously Dick footed it forth, stumbling among bushes, and groping with his hands; and presently the crisp noise of gravel underfoot told him that he had struck upon an alley.

Here he paused, and taking his crossbow from where he kept it concealed under his long tabard, he prepared it for instant action, and went forward with greater resolution and assurance. The path led him straight to the group of buildings.

He seemed to be sorely dilapidated; the windows of the house were secured by crazy shutters; the stables were open and empty; there was no hay in the hay-loft, no corn in the corn-barn. Any one would have supposed the place to be deserted. But Dick had good reason to think otherwise. He continued his

inspection, visiting the offices, trying all the windows. At length he came round to the sea-side of the house, and there, sure enough, there burned a pale light in one of the upper windows.

He stepped back a little way, till he thought he could see the movement of a shadow on the wall of the apartment. Then he remembered that in the stable, his groping hand had rested for a moment on a ladder, and he returned with all dispatch to bring it. The ladder was very short, but yet, by standing on the other end, he could bring his hands as high as the iron bars of the window; and seizing these, he raised his body by main force until his eyes could see into the interior of the room.

Two persons were within; the first he readily knew to be Dame Hatch; the second, a tall and beautiful girl, and grave of countenance, he could not but be the daughter of his lord. He lay his wood-companion, Jack, whom he had thought to punish with a belt?

He came to the top of the round of the ladder in a kind of amazement. He had never thought of his sweetheart as of so superior a being; and he was instantly taken with a feeling of diffidence. But he had little opportunity for thought. A low "Hut!" sounded from close by, and he hastened to descend the ladder.

"Greenhouse," came the reply, in tones similarly guarded.

"What want ye?" asked Dick.

"The house is watched, Master Shelton," returned the outlaw. "We are not alone to watch it; for even as I lay on my belly on the wall I saw two prowling in the dark, and heard them whistle softly one to the other."

"By my sooth," said Dick, "but this is passing strange! Were they not men of Sir Daniel's?"

"Nay, sir, that they were not," returned Greenhouse; "for if I have eyes in my head, every man-jack of them weareth me a white band in his bonnet, something checkered with dark."

"White, checkered with dark," repeated Dick. "Fait, is a badge I know not. It is none of this country's badges. Well, and that be so, let us slip quietly forth from this garden as we may; for here we are in an evil posture for defense. Beyond all question there are men of Sir Daniel's in that house, and to be taken between two shots is a beggarman's portion. Take ye this ladder; I must leave it where I found it."

They returned the ladder to the stable, and groped their way to the place where they had entered.

Capper had taken Greenhouse's position on the cope, and now he leaned down his hand, and first one and then the other, pulled them up, and instantly they had returned to their old ambush in the gorse.

"Now, John Capper," said Dick, "back with you to Shoreby, even as for your life. Bring me instantly what men ye can collect. Here shall be the rendezvous; or, if the men be scattered and the day be near at hand before they muster, let the place be something farther back, and by the entering in of the town.

Greenhouse and I lie here to watch. Speed ye, John Capper, and the saints aid you to dispatch. And now, Greenhouse," he continued, as he saw Capper had deplored him, "let you and I go round about the garden in a wide circuit. I would fain see whether thine eyes betrayed thee."

Keeping well outwards from the wall, and proffing by every height and hollow, they passed about two sides, beholding nothing. On the third side the garden wall was built close upon the beach, and to preserve the distance necessary to their purpose, they had to go some way down upon the sands. Although the tide was still pretty out, the surf was so high, and the sands so flat, that at each breaker a great sheet of froth and water came careering over the expanse, and Dick and Greenhouse made this part of their inspection wading, now to the ankles, and now as deep as to the knees, in the salt and icy waters of the German ocean.

For all that they were rewarded. Suddenly, against the comparative whiteness of the garden wall, the figure of a man was seen, like a faint Chinese shadow, violently signalling with both arms. As he dropped again to the earth, another arose a little farther on and repeated the same performance. And so, like a silent watchman, they saw the figure of a man in the field, between the surf and the garden wall, there began, in the darkness, a doubtful, furious, and deadly contest.

The strangers were well armed; they fell in silence upon their assailants; and the affray became a series of single combats. Dick, who had come first into the melley, was engaged by three at once, and he was soon surrounded, blow by blow, but the other coming upon him, slowly, he was fain to give ground before their One of these was a huge fellow, with almost a giant for stature, and armed with a two-handed sword, which he brandished like a switch. Against this opponent, with his reach of arm and the length and weight of his weapon, Dick and his bill were quite defenceless; and had the other continued to fight vigorously in the attack, the last must have inevitably fallen.

This second man, however, less in stature and slower in his movements, desisted for a moment to peer about him in the darkness, and to give ear to the sounds of the battle. The giant still pursued his advantage, and still Dick fled before him, spying for his chance. Then the huge blade flashed and descended, and the lad, leaping on one side and running in, slashed sideways and upwards with his bill. A roar of agony responded, and the older man was still in the air, before the wounded man could raise his formidable weapon, Dick, twice repeating his blow, had brought him to the ground.

The next moment he was engaged upon more equal terms, with his second opponent. Here there was no great difference in size, and though the man, fighting with sword and dagger against a bill, and being wary and quick of fence, had a certain superiority of arms, Dick more than made it up by his greater agility on foot. Neither at first gained any obvious advantage; but the older man was still in the air, before the wounded man could raise his formidable weapon, Dick, twice repeating his blow, had brought him to the ground.

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and tabards were concealed among the gorse, and the two hands set resolutely forward.

Dick, when he had reached the other side of the house, passed his arm in a line, about twenty yards from the garden wall, and took possession himself a few paces in front. Then he all shouted with one voice, and closed upon the enemy.

These, lying widely scattered, stiff with cold, and taken at unawares, sprang stupidly to the ground, and stood undecided. Before they had time to give their courage about them, or even to form an idea of the number and mettle of their assailants, a similar shout of onslaught sounded in their ears from the far side of the enclosure. Thereupon they gave themselves up for lost and ran.

In this way the two small troops of the men of Black Arrow closed upon the sea front of the garden wall, and took a part of the strangers, as it were, between two fires; while the whole of the remainder ran for their lives in different directions, and were soon hopelessly scattered in the darkness.

For all that, the fight was but beginning. Dick's outlaws, although they had the advantage of the surprise, were still considerably outnumbered by the men they had surrounded. The tide had flowed, in the meanwhile; the beach was washed to a depth of about three feet, between the surf and the garden wall, there began, in the darkness, a doubtful, furious, and deadly contest.

The strangers were well armed; they fell in silence upon their assailants; and the affray became a series of single combats. Dick, who had come first into the melley, was engaged by three at once, and he was soon surrounded, blow by blow, but the other coming upon him, slowly, he was fain to give ground before their One of these was a huge fellow, with almost a giant for stature, and armed with a two-handed sword, which he brandished like a switch. Against this opponent, with his reach of arm and the length and weight of his weapon, Dick and his bill were quite defenceless; and had the other continued to fight vigorously in the attack, the last must have inevitably fallen.

This second man, however, less in stature and slower in his movements, desisted for a moment to peer about him in the darkness, and to give ear to the sounds of the battle. The giant still pursued his advantage, and still Dick fled before him, spying for his chance. Then the huge blade flashed and descended, and the lad, leaping on one side and running in, slashed sideways and upwards with his bill. A roar of agony responded, and the older man was still in the air, before the wounded man could raise his formidable weapon, Dick, twice repeating his blow, had brought him to the ground.

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